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ABSTRACT

A discussion of those programs and activities of institutions of higher education, of employers and of professional associations which involve some sort of joint action or a collaborative effort on the part of any combination of two or more of any of the three is presented. The focus of this discussion is on those training programs which require released time, depend upon cooperative decision making patterns, and which are clearly aimed at systematic career development. The three major forces--the university, the professional association and the employer--are frequently completely separate and unrelated to each other. Brief description is given of the Adult Basic Education Professional Staff Development Program in the southeastern states and administered by the Southern Regional Education Board. There were two main elements of the program plan: (a) a major role for higher education institutions and (b) a leadership role within each state for the state director of each state and for members of his staff. It was found that the process of sharing resources, of planning together, and of learning from each other can only take place within a deliberately developed intellectual climate which supports fact-finding, systematic problem solving, and rational self-evaluation. (CK)

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THE ROLE OF THE PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATION IN CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION*

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How can a teacher . . or a nurse . . or a medical practitioner . . or a member of any professional group continue his professional education by himself? The most likely answer is that, except in the rarest of circumstances, he cannot. He can, of course, observe the practices of his colleagues, attend conferences, and read professional journals. Beyond that, however, he usually requires the technical and scholarly resources of a college or university and it helps to have the support and encouragement of one's peers. Frequently the employer, in a variety of wonderous ways, "motivates" the desire for continuing professional development and often provides facilities or instructors, or both, for continue-to-learn-while-you-earn professional development opportunities.

While most efforts at stimulating professional growth are directed at improving an individual's competency the individual, as an individual, usually has little to say about what he will learn or how he will learn it. Influencing universities and employers--the customary sponsors of professional development programs--is too difficult a task for each worker to undertake on his own. As a way of compensating for his individual lack of power he is increasingly looking to his professional association to speak for him or to provide tailor-made training opportunities for him.

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Other strong influences on patterns of continuing professional training are accrediting agencies of all kinds, licensing bodies, mandated legislation, and the ever-changing pressure of public opinion. These latter forces, however, seldom, if ever, act as sponsors of professional development programs. The usual sponsors are the university, the employer, and--to a greater or lesser degree depending on the profession--the professional association.

Three Predominant Sponsors

Because of the specific nature of the assignment given me I will limit my discussion to those programs and activities of institutions of higher education, of employers and of professional associations which involve some sort of joint action or collaborative effort on the part of any combination of two or more of any of the three. Further, I am arbitrarily excluding from consideration the individual choice pattern of continuing professional development wherein an individual elects to take a year off from work to earn an advanced degree, or go to summer school, or attend a Saturday morning class--even if by so doing he enrolls at a university and receives a promotion or other reward from his employer. In other words, the focus of this discussion will be on those training programs which require released time, depend upon cooperative decision making patterns, and which are clearly aimed at systematic career development. In all these respects they represent something vastly more significant than the "professional day a year" approach that those of us who have been teachers are all too familiar with.

To a considerable extent, in terms of effective collaborative efforts focused upon continuing professional development, the three major forces--the university, the professional association, and the employer--are frequently completely separate and unrelated to each other. This is true even though, to a considerable extent, each one of these potential training resources delivers training programs to about the same clientele.

A Sponsor's Soliloquy

So far as I know, there is no carefully investigated and fully documented support for the generalizations advanced in the preceeding paragraph. Yet, I would suspect that the experience of all of us tends to confirm them to some extent. However, to give these assumptions some empherical examination, let me paraphrase what I consider to be some fairly typical comments from some fairly representative professional types: First . . .

The Practitioner: (The teacher, the lawyer, the nurse, the medical general practitioner).

"We appreciate the need for further research, for further theoretical development, and for the dissemination of new concepts. That is the job of the universities. We want to do all that we can to support their work and we welcome to our profession the newly trained young people who have been exposed to new theory. However, for those us us presently on the firing line--what we need is information about a wider range of new techniques; new ideas that can be translated directly into some practical application. For our continuing profession-

al development we don't need lectures that raise basic questions to which there are no immediate answers--give us illustrations or exchanges of experience with fellow workers that show us how to better meet the daily demands of our jobs."

The Employer: (The school administrator, the general manager, the elected public official, the hospital administrator).

"We are the ones who are accountable; we are the ones who lose our jobs, our contracts, or the election if we don't deliver what our bosses--be they stockholders, board members, or the electorate--want and expect. As administrators of a program, we are in a position to see the whole picture. We are the ones who usually secure--and then account for--the funds used in in-service professional development. We must, therefore, be the ones to decide what training is needed, who will do it, and what are the ways of carrying it out most efficiently."

The Scholar: (The college professor, subject matter specialist in a professional organization, the consultant).

"We recognize the need for the extension of practical applications of training and for a continuous improvement of operational techniques. But, ideally, this can best be done in the setting of a guiding theoretical construct. There is no one answer that fits a variety of problems. To pretend that there is is to delude. As new knowledge becomes available as a result of experimentation or conceptualization, we have an obligation to make it immediately available to the field. But this must be done in a setting that stimulates diagnosis, analysis, and continuing experimentation--not in a setting that builds a false expectation of pat answers."

Perhaps these "typical" comments are a bit overdrawn; but in the fields I know best--general education and adult education--such conflicting points of view do exist. As a brief case reference, permit me to refer to the Adult Basic Education Professional Staff Development Program in the southeastern states and administered by the Southern Regional Education Board.

A Case Example

In 1965 and 1966, with the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act and the allotment of large amounts of money to all southern states for Adult Basic Education classes, the need for an additional supply of trained teachers became acute. Efforts of the state directors of adult education--the administrative employees of the State Departments of Education--led to the development of a proposal for funds to provide regular staff training throughout an eight state region. There were two main elements of the plan: (a) a major role for higher education institutions and (b) a leadership role within each state for the state director of each state and for members of his staff.

For the reasons implicit in the soliloquies suggested above--the differing perceptions of various professional groups about training goals and training needs--conflicting points of view over training curriculum and methodology were soon in evidence.

As the project developed, two other major groupings of individuals became involved and the potential for further conflict about goals and expectations was still further heightened. The two new groups were graduate assistants in the expanding professional training programs of the region and local directors of adult education--the men and women

on the firing line who ran the programs, the improvement of which was the target toward which all the professional development was ultimately directed.

While initially, at least, the graduate students may have had more philosophically in common with the professors than with the other two groups--and the local directors with the state directors--it soon became clear that these were four different groups with four different goal structures and four different sets of needs seeking fulfillment. Working out an accommodation of these differences within a common goal structure became one of the major challenges and, although never fully resolved, a credible accomplishment of the project.

The national, state, and local professional associations had some role in bringing this about. It was, however, with the exception of the part played by the Council of State Directors--a national affiliate of the National Association of Public Continuing and Adult Education--a generally minor role and in a number of states, a non-existent role. In no case were teachers directly given a voice in the determination of their own training. The primary catalytic agent was the regional sponsor, the Southern Regional Education Board. One of the great insights of the project was the recognition and acceptance of the role--and the definition of the function--of the catalytic agent in bringing about a dramatic change in professional development concepts and practices.

In more usual circumstances, however, what instrumentality can serve as the catalytic agent to bring disparate groups closer toward common understandings and the sponsorship of cooperative programs?

The Role of the Professional Association

In the field of general education it is the state and local education association that is beginning to emerge as the force that can facilitate the integration of the resources needed to bring about instructional improvement through more effective continuing professional development.

Instructional Councils--regularly constituted committees of representatives of the employer and the local association and designed to jointly plan professional development programs--are already in operation in many local communities. This trend toward deeper involvement in all aspects of instructional improvement by local education associations can be expected to continue. For one reason, the funds available for a continued escalation of economic benefits are not without limitation. For another, as the trend toward more and more bargaining for salaries and general financial support for the schools is shifted to the state level, the energies of more and more local education associations will be directed toward serving as the change agent in bringing about more meaningful approaches to continuing professional development. More important than either of these is the genuine concern of most teachers for finding better ways of bringing about more effective learning.

So far as adult education is specifically concerned, my colleague at the NEA, Richard W. Cortright, has been instrumental in helping bring about in California professional development courses jointly sponsored by the state and local professional associations and by the University of California. The purpose of these courses is to provide useful university credit activities for teachers which are designed by teachers

and staffed by teachers. They represent both the reaction of teachers against much of traditional education and the effort by teachers to meet their own professional education needs.

The first of these courses taught the methodology of adult education--the methodology required for dealing with a non-captive audience--to secondary school teachers. The second course is designed to assist teachers of adults reinforce and supplement the offerings of the new national television series for adults who have not completed high school, Project STRIVE, a program of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The most significant development of all, however, is the program of the NEA's recently reorganized Division of Instruction and Professional Development, set up to generate plans for up to four national NEA professional development centers--tentatively called Teachers Centers--which will hopefully, in the words of the Division's new director, James Becker, "provide teachers with protracted periods of in-depth study." Dr. Becker further describes these new centers: "In real settings, classroom teachers working with other classroom teachers could learn about the latest instructional technology, methods, and materials available, as well as begin the process of learning how to construct their own. Genuine partnerships involving a variety of specialists could be utilized, and our learners would benefit from the best we can produce. Teachers, learners, researchers, developers, professors of education, administrators, board members, and parents could begin cooperatively to develop better programs."

As this program develops an essential part of the plan is to explore and to refine ways whereby the state and local affiliates of the NEA can negotiate with state and local school boards to re-direct at

least some in-service funds now being spent by state and local school systems into Teacher Centers managed and staffed by teachers and drawing on the resources of school administrators, university professors, and others as they are needed.

Factors Affecting Multiple Sponsorship

In a strict sense, in the various illustrations used in this paper, only the Southern Regional Education Board acted as a true catalytic agent--that is, remaining relatively unchanged in the process of bringing about change in others. In the other illustrations the professional association acts not only as a catalyst but is acted upon and itself changed.

Analyzing the complex social process that takes place in multi-sponsored programs is beyond the scope of this paper. Some attention, however, must be given to what is required to make multiple sponsorship work. Is it predetermined and precise role definition? Is it accurate diagnosis of the social and political pressures influencing each potential sponsor? Is it increased awareness of--and heightened competency in--the basic skills of collaboration?

Role Definition

At first thought it would seem that of fundamental importance to building effective joint sponsorship of professional development programs would be some self-conscious examination of the appropriate role of each agency in stimulating, providing, or financing programs. Some reflection, however, points to the fact that even more important than this is a willingness to deal with the troublesome phenomena that in a dynamic and effective pattern of interdependence, role changes will con-

tinue to occur and may vary widely from setting to setting. In these days of intensive development of staff training programs by employers, a growing intellectual sophistication on the part of professional associations, and the lessening inclination of institutions of higher education to corral their resources within ivory towers it is difficult to generalize about any one agency necessarily having any greater competency than any other in theory development, change potential, research capability, the provision of technically well equipped training facilities, or any of the other ingredients that go together to make up an adequate continuing professional development program.

Insofar as generalizations can be made it is my view that, except for demonstration purposes, the professional association should not itself operate training programs. Dollars from members' dues should not be spent in hiring "outside" experts, professors--or their own members--to provide training. In most instances it is the employers' dollars that should be so spent. Membership dollars can best be spent in making certain that employers provide meaningful professional development programs, that universities and other training resources acquire the means of identifying practitioner needs and a more sophisticated awareness of how to meet them, and for use in lobbying for an ever-increasing percentage of the public and corporate dollar to be spent for professional development programs. It is to everyone's advantage this this be done. By concentrating on this role the professional association can assume leadership in moving the three agencies most involved into an interdependent, inter-linking configuration.

Internal and External Pressures

Of considerable relevance to the success of any cooperatively sponsored program is some understanding of the various kinds of social

pressure which uniquely operate upon universities, employers, and professional associations.

It has been my experience that in terms of university involvement in continuing professional development, the one force that has the greatest impact upon them is the availability--or lack of availability--of funds for training. University boards of trustees do not seem to be inclined to voluntarily allocate funds for continuing professional development--particularly if it is a program involving multiple sponsors. In the southeastern states regional training program referred to earlier, one of its greatest achievements is that it has successfully involved 23 institutions of higher education in carrying out cooperative professional development programs in the field of adult education. When compared to the paucity of similar training opportunities at the university level in some other regions of the country, this is indeed a remarkable achievement. On the other hand, the greatest threat facing the full continuation of the program is the uncertainty of adequate state and institutional funding now that federal funds have been withdrawn. To a large extent, I think it fair to say, that if programs of this kind do not too greatly tax the universities' available resources for regular graduate or under-graduate training, presidents of many of the universities and boards of trustees are willing to go along. It now remains to be seen how many of them will--or can--make the decisions required to commit university funds to the support of cooperatively developed professional training programs in the area of adult education.

The employer--in most of the illustrations I have used, the school district--must respond to an almost unending number of outside forces. The board of education must react to parents, to taxpayers, to the state legislature, to teachers, to regulations of the state department of education, and to guidelines of the federal government whenever it spends federal funds. Under the enormity of these pressures, it sometimes is the inclination of the school board and its administrative staff to forego continuing professional development altogether. It encourages instead, through salary and tenure incentives, continuing professional development which the teacher pays for himself, does on his own time on an individual basis at a university course he takes during the summer or in the evenings, or on Saturday morning as part of an extension program.

Such continuing professional development as does take place within the time and space at the control of the employer frequently is done with little commitment to utilizing problem-solving or discovery methods. With many pressures--and little time--the tendency is to tell 'em what they need to do and expect them to follow through!

Most of the pressures on the professional association come from within. Its officers are, or should be, responsible to their own members. It is for this reason that in the economic field, the local education association has recently become highly effective in bringing about change. It has used strikes and work stoppages a few times and, in many more instances, it has used its powers of negotiation and persuasion. In the future these same pressures can be counted upon to demand relevant training, the use of up-dated training methods, the identification of skillful peers from whom learning can be obtained,

and--in general--a voice in training policy.

Skills of Collaboration

A third element in insuring the success of multiple sponsored professional development programs is the level of sophistication and skill required of those who would collaborate. As frequently as not, it is assumed that common sense and belief in a good cause will overcome the problems growing out of the stress of maintaining established role identities, of coping with jurisdictional rivalries, or the need to establish competitive financial advantage. Difficult as these problems are to overcome, they represent an area to which some social scientists have given attention and where some scientific discipline--as well as common sense--has predictable usefulness in raising the level of effective problem solving.

In discussing the development of collaborative training programs on the part of universities and state directors of adult education in the southeast, I indicated that an initial--and to some extent continuing difficulty--was the development of a process whereby the various groups learned to work and cope with each other. In retrospect it seems regretable that little attention was given to systematically observing and documenting this process. Had this been done the staff of the Southern Regional Education Board and its consultants might have had useful data in helping accelerate cooperative programs.

In another federally funded project such observations were made. In 1965, the United States government funded a three-year inter-university, multiple school system project which had as its aim the development and testing of strategies for planned change in educational systems. In an article in the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science "An Emergent Inter-University Consortium for Educational Change", vol.

7, no. 2, 1971, Robert A. Luke, Jr. and Dorothy Mial describe the inter-organizational issues of power and influence, the institutional and individual needs for autonomy, and the consultant-client relationships that had to be dealt with in maintaining the consortium. Although the article does not include an analysis of the difficulties of maintaining the university-school system relationship the article clearly outlines the complexity of inter-university collaboration and describes how this particular consortium deliberately undertook to find the means of solving the problems instrinsic to inter-organizational sponsorship.

But what worked for one institional configuration may not work for another, and therefore, for those of us who are convinced of the importance of encouraging multiple sponsorships, training for ourselves in the skills of working with others may be the place to begin.

Within my own field I am committed to strengthening the role of the professional association in bringing about a continuing improvement in the measurable effectiveness of in-service professional development programs. This is but an extension of what is at this moment taking place all over our country as teachers, nurses, and tradesmen--to name but a few--negotiate with their employers for more suitable conditions of work or what they consider to be more equitable economic returns for their services.

Employers, institutions of higher education, and individual workers all have the need--and the right--to listen to each other, to influence each other, and to learn from each other. This process of sharing resources, of planning together, and of learning from each other can only take place within a deliberately developed intellectual climate which supports fact-finding, systematic problem solving, and rational self-evaluation.

In the process, those of us who feel a concern for more effective continuing professional development will ourselves learn. The result cannot help but be more workers teaching as well as learning; more employers learning as well as teaching; and the university doing what it aspires to do--extend the scope of its ability to meet the increasingly sophisticated training needs of workers and employers alike.

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